



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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County Executive

News Release

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County Executive Proposes Bills to Streamline Farm Stand Process, Establish Data Center Design Criteria, Notify Public of Comprehensive Rezoning Requests

FREDERICK, Md. – Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner today unveiled three pieces of land-use legislation. One bill would support farmers who want to establish a roadside farm stand to sell their produce and other farm products. The proposal would streamline the approval process for farm stands and allow small farm stands under 600 square feet to be constructed without a building permit. “We know residents want to buy locally produced food, so this proposal is a win-win for everyone,” Executive Gardner said. A second bill would establish design criteria and a review process for an emerging industry in Frederick County to ensure that development happens well. The final piece of legislation ensures an open, transparent process to notify the public when a comprehensive rezoning of multiple properties is proposed by the county.

“My goal is to ensure the economic viability of agriculture in Frederick County as we accelerate preserving the best farmland through our preservation efforts,” Executive Gardner said, “and, it is equally important that we ensure new development happens well and that we protect our high quality of life and the aspects we cherish most about our community.”

Farm Stands

This legislation changes two key areas of the County’s zoning laws. First, it allows value-added processes to take place on parcels as small as 10 acres. Currently, the minimum size is 25 acres. Second, roadside farm stands smaller than 600 square feet would not require a building permit. Stands up to 1,500 square feet would have an expedited review process. To qualify for the streamlined process, at least 51% of products sold at the farm stand must be produced by the owner, and the products must be produced within Frederick County and in the immediate neighborhood of the stand.

Critical Digital Infrastructure

Legislation would establish a new land use category, Critical Digital Infrastructure, for data centers and their associated infrastructure. The use would be permitted on land that is zoned Limited Industrial or General Industrial. The bill defines design guidelines and criteria, such as lot sizes, setbacks, screening, landscaping and building heights. It would set limits on lighting and noise levels, and require strict buffering standards to limit how much of a center can be seen from roads and adjoining properties. An architectural review committee would be established to ensure that future development meets high standards.

Notification for Comprehensive Rezoning

An amendment to zoning law would set standards for public notification when the County proposes comprehensive rezoning of multiple properties, such as a preservation overlay. Signs would be required at intervals where they can be seen by the public, and notifications would be mailed to all affected and adjacent

property owners. The notification process for individual property owner or developer applications would remain unchanged.

All three pieces of legislation can be found at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/Executive. The County Council will hold a workshop on the proposals on January 25.

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